cubic feet of timber were extracted from the forests yielding a revenue of nearly Rs. 14 lakhs. The work of forest conservancy went on effectively with the result that the revenue of the department has been steadily on the increase during the past five years. The net revenue during 1103 was Rs. 7·60 lakhs or Rs. 304 per square mile of forests under the control of the department, a yield of roughly.8 annas per acre. But the State forests have not merely a direct revenue value. Although the theory that forests induce rain is now discredited, there is little doubt that forest lands retain water and feed rivers and streams thus contributing to the fertility of the surrounding country.

Excise.

12. I told you last year that the Government had decided to start the interesting experiment of local option at Changanachery. The cardinal principle underlying a decision as to such social restrictive measures as local option is that a small majority should not be allowed to impose its will upon an unwilling large minority. A conviction registered by fifty per cent or a little more is not decisive as it shows opinion to be almost evenly divided. Government cannot act in favour of one side when the scales are so evenly balanced. The majority should unmistakably express the decisive will of the people. In that event the minority can properly be regarded as negligible and their opposition can justifiably beloverborne. A majority vote of 75 per cent of the municipal voters was, therefore, fixed by the Government for a decision on the question and the Municipal President has been asked to arrange for the recording of votes. The action of Government will depend on the results of the voting.

Legislative Council.

13. The second Council convened under Regulation II of 1097 was dissolved last year and the third Council met for the first time towards the close of the year. The total number of electors was 140,331 or an increase of 17,881 over the number for the previous election in 1101. Of these 56 per cent actually polled in 22 out of the 28 constituencies where polling was necessary. In the Trivandrum town constituency and in the general rural constituencies, 58 per cent of the electors voted. The highest percentage of voters was in the North Commerce and Industries constituency, *viz.*, 89. These figures provide an index to the growing interest taken by the people generally in public affairs.

Police.

14. In my address last year I referred to the increase in motor traffic and to the good work done by the new Traffic Inspectors. With the rapidly increasing number of motor vehicles the problem of road traffic is becoming more difficult. Government feel with the Police Department that the present staff is inadequate to cope with the problem. Proposals for the organisation of a separate traffic branch of the department with an adequate and efficient controlling staff are being made

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ready for the consideration of Government. Representations have often been made in this Assembly for the establishment of new police outposts and for the strengthening of staff in particular places. Government felt that the question should not be dealt with piecemeal but required a comprehensive study. An experienced officer of the department was accordingly deputed to examine the entire question of allocation.

Registration of Assurances.

15. You will see from the report of the Department of Registration that the pieces of social legislation affecting the Nair, the Ezhava and the Nanjinad Vellala communities, have brought about a considerable number of partitions of the property of long established joint families. There were, up to the end of 1103, 27,054 partition deeds of property to the value of Rs. 4·08 crores among Nairs. The corresponding figures were 8,888 for Rs. 1·15 crores among Ezhavas and 558 for Rs. 28·39 lakhs among Nanjinad Vellalas.

Joint Stock Companies.

16. The year witnessed a boom in company promotion. Eighty-five companies were registered during the year, of which 66 conducted banking and loan transactions. This is the largest number of banks on record started in any one particular year and their authorised capital was Rs. 96 lakhs. It is significant that the majority of these conducted *chitties*. It remains to be seen whether this rapid growth of small banking concerns is healthy and sound economically. The question of closer control over *chitties*, by revising the existing law on the subject, is engaging my attention.

Co-operative Societies.

17. The co-operative movement continues to spread. The number of societies increased from 1,555 to 1,688; the number of members from 150,932 to 177,824; and the working capital from Rs. 33·63 lakhs to Rs. 42·59 lakhs. The majority of these societies continued to do credit business alone. The number of societies of the backward and depressed classes has also increased with a corresponding increase in the number of members and in the amount of working capital. It is noteworthy that there are 3 societies whose membership is confined to women alone and that the total number of women members in all the societies together rose from 15,687 in 1102 to 19,507 in 1103. The growing popularity of the movement among women is full of promise for the good of the country. The time has come for a thorough examination of the working of co-operative societies in the State so as to guide it on sound and healthy lines calculated to help the economic rehabilitation of the masses.

Public Works.

18. The total expenditure incurred by the Public Works Department during 1103 was Rs. 37·45 lakhs, of which communications absorbed Rs. 21·54 lakhs and buildings Rs. 6·80 lakhs. The expenditure on buildings was the highest on record during the past quinquennium.

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